

**PKR: Immigration has no legal right to revoke passports of critical Malaysians**  
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**By Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 31 — The Immigration Department has no legal or administrative right to revoke the passports of citizens who criticise Malaysia's government, opposition party PKR said today.

PKR was responding to the reported remark by the department's director-general Datuk Alias Ahmad that those engaged in anti-government activities overseas could find their passports revoked, condemning it as an "utterly misguided statement" that would infringe a Malaysian's "most fundamental rights as a citizen".

"The Immigration Department has no business to comment on what Malaysians do overseas and use the government's administrative power to curtail the rights of citizens," PKR communications director Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad said in a statement today.

He then went on to say that there was a difference between criticising the government and the country.

"Criticism of the government does not equate to criticism of the country. More than at any time in history, Malaysians across the world are expressing their desire for democratic reforms and free and fair elections. That should be celebrated, not shunned."

Nik Nazmi (picture) also pulled the home minister into the picture, pointing out that the Immigration Department is under the ministry's jurisdiction.

"It must be noted that the Immigration Department is under the purview Minister of Home Affairs Datuk Seri Dr Zahid Hamidi who has been cracking down on dissent since he took office this month. Thus this latest statement by Alias shows a disturbing pattern that can be seen under Zahid's regime that totally contradicts the notion of a national reconciliation advanced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak," he said, appearing to echo Global Bersih's statement yesterday.

Yesterday, polls reform group Global Bersih slammed the Immigration director-general for his reported remark, accusing him of threatening national unity besides being ignorant of the law.

The election reform movement comprising Malaysians abroad wants the authorities to act on the Immigration's top official, whose alleged remark it said goes against the country's immigration law and makes a mockery of Najib's call for national reconciliation in the wake of the divisive May 5 polls.

"Global Bersih demands that the D-G immediately withdraws his recent statement that Immigration will revoke the passports of Malaysians abroad who undertake anti-government activities.

"Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, under whose direct control Immigration operates, must immediately and publicly chasten his director-general for intimidation, incompetence and ignorance of his own administrative reach," it said in a statement.

The group also told Malaysians abroad to “ignore such threats and keep in mind that it is their constitutional right to freely express their opinion on all matters, including the divisive state of politics and recently concluded poll.”

Alias was reported to have said the Immigration Department was tracking Malaysians abroad including students who attempted to topple the government and bring down the country’s image and warned that they faced stern action under section 8 of the Immigration Act 1959/1963.

“Malaysians who break the law and shame the country can be blacklisted, their passport can be cancelled between three and five years,” he was quoted as telling Malay daily Berita Harian in its report dated May 27.

However, Alias had refuted he had made such a remark on his Twitter account, @KP\_Immigration, on the same day.

“Its totaly [sic] wrong reporting by BH reporter..sorry,” he said, in response to a tweet post, citing several lawyers as saying the Immigration director-general had no powers to revoke any Malaysian’s passport.

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